

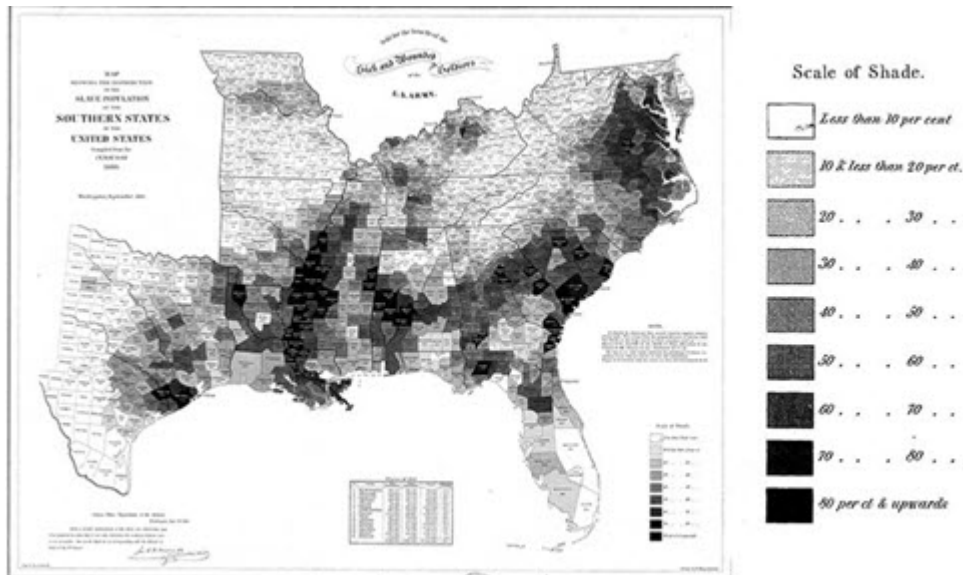
## Mapping Slavery: Investigating an 1860s Slave Population Density Map

### Description:

In this activity, students analyze statistical patterns in a historic map of slave population densities in order to explore the interplay between the geography of the southern United States and the institution of slavery during the pre-Civil War era. This activity is designed to be followed by <Mapping Slavery: The impact of an 1860s slave population density map>, which has students continue their analysis of the significance of this particular map to President Abraham Lincoln and his strategy for the Union during the Civil War.

### Standard:

Civil War and Reconstruction (1850-1877) Standard 1: The causes of the Civil War



### Activity Instructions for Students

Since 1790 and every 10 years afterward, the United States government has collected statistics on the population of the country. In addition to recording the number of white males, white females, and free people of color, the early censuses included statistics on the slave population of the United States.

The statistical map in this activity was the first of its kind to be produced in the United States. It was produced by the U.S. Coast Survey in June 1861, two months after the Confederacy was formed and the secession crisis became the main focus of Abraham Lincoln's term. The map displays the density or concentration of the slave population in the southern United States using statistics taken from the 1860 Census. Joseph C. G. Kennedy, the Superintendent of the 1850 and 1860 Censuses validated the accuracy of the map, saying that the map could "be relied on as corresponding with the official returns of the 8th Census."

In this activity, you will identify and analyze the geographic patterns of slavery in the Southern states, and how this pattern reveals the social and political context of the United States during the Civil War.

**Statistical map** – also called a thematic map, this type of map is used to display a specific theme associated with a particular geographic area. These maps can display a wide range of physical, social, political, cultural, and economic characteristics.

## Activity Assessment

- What is the definition of a statistical map and how does it relate to the map presented in this activity?

*Student' responses will vary, but should reference the definition of **statistical map** provided in the activity and should specify that the theme depicted in this map is population density, specifically, the population density of slaves in the southern United States in 1860 at the time the 8th Census was taken.*

- What is the purpose of the "Scale of Shade" on the map? Give examples in your response.

*The "Scale of Shade" key defines the parameters for each category of population density on the map. For example, the lightest shading on the map corresponds with the lowest population density of slaves (less than 10%) while the darkest shading on the map corresponds with the highest population density of slaves (greater than 80%).*

- In what ways does this map reveal information that might not be obvious when looking at a data table with the same statistics and information?

*Concentrations of slaves are shown and similar areas, regions, and states can be compared on a map with the use of color, line, and symbolization. Observations about the relationship between geography and the theme of the map are easier to make when making comparisons based on a graphic representation of the data rather than a large set of numerical data.*

- What population density patterns do you see depicted in the map? How do those patterns correspond or conflict with your prior knowledge of what you know about slavery prior to the Civil War?

*Students' responses will vary, but should mention a high density of slaves along the Mississippi River, as well as along the coast and much of South Carolina. This should make sense to students, given the importance of water as a means to transport both the human labor needed to support the institution of slavery as well as the material outputs of the institution.*

- Are you surprised by any of the information depicted on the map? Do any of the population densities conflict with your previous understanding of the antebellum South? Use specific examples in your response.

*Students' responses will vary, but they should use examples from the map and map key in their response.*

## Teacher's Notes

### Learning Objectives

- Students will be able to recognize that statistical (thematic) maps reveal important geographic patterns that might not be immediately evident within numerical census tables.
- Students will be able to correlate numerical values within the map key with geographic areas on the map.
- Students will be able to identify and analyze patterns of slavery within the southern United States region during the Civil War era.

### Blooms Taxonomy

Analyzing

## Instructions for Teachers

A two-page background on this map is available for teachers who would like more information about the body of research done on the history and usage of this map. It can be accessed via the map's Resource Page in the Research section of this site.

<http://www.census.gov/history/pdf/slavedensitymap.pdf>

## Before this Activity

*Note: Students can explore a static version of the map provided on this page or they can explore the map at high-resolution using the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) interactive viewer.*

<http://historicalcharts.noaa.gov/historical/preview/image/CWSLAVE>

Have students review and explore the map on their own, noting any observations or questions that they have. If students are using NOAA's interactive viewer, note for them that they can view the map down to the county level.

Explain how statistical maps (thematic maps) are used and mention that this map was the first of its kind to be produced in the United States using results from the 1860 Census.

Review the thematic map key. Relate the categories/percentages in the key to the areas (counties) on the map. Identify a few of the major population centers (i.e. cities, towns) that fall within individual counties.

Review Abraham Lincoln's presidency and his focus on slavery and Emancipation and the timing of this map.

Have students read the "Activity Instructions for Students" and address any questions they have on the background and context of the map.

## During this Activity

Have students discuss the map in small groups before answering the questions in the "Activity Assessment."

Monitor students as they work, discussing their observations about the map and answering any questions they have.

## After this Activity

Hold a class discussion, incorporating a review of the major themes presented in the activity as well as students' responses to the "Activity Assessment" questions and any noteworthy observations.

## Optional Activity Extension

Have students explore the Census Bureau's collection of other thematic maps. These maps will help students to get a better understanding of the value of thematic maps as well as the historical importance that the slave population thematic map played in opening the door to the creation of other thematic maps over the decades.

<http://www.census.gov/geo/maps-data/maps/thematic.html>